



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE and local law enforcement arrest gang members in joint operation
Actions are part of Operation Community Shield, anti-gang effort credited with more than 2,300 arrests nationwide

HONOLULU, Hawaii – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents have teamed up with officers from the local law enforcement agencies to arrest foreign nationals with ties to violent street gangs as part of Operation Community Shield, a nationwide ICE-led anti-gang initiative.

Over the last year, 9 foreign nationals have been arrested in the State of Hawaii under the auspices of Operation Community Shield. Most of the arrests have occurred on the island of Maui. Of the arrest occurring on Maui, two have been MS-13 members. MS-13 is one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the United States. The United States Attorney's Office has prosecuted one gang member for re-entering the United States after a deportation, a felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison. The remaining foreign nationals have been placed in formal immigration removal proceedings and have been removed or are pending removal from the United States.

"Street gangs pose a growing public safety threat to communities throughout the state of Hawaii," said Wayne Wills, Special Agent in Charge for ICE investigations in Honolulu. "The violence, sophistication, and scope of these organizations have reached intolerable levels in larger metropolitan areas. We are committed to partnering with our local, state and federal associates to dismantle these criminal organizations and prevent them from embedding in our communities."

Since its launch one year ago, Operation Community Shield has resulted in the arrest of 2,388 members of 239 different gangs.

"The migration of mainland and foreign street gang members to Maui County and Hawaii is a disturbing trend, said Thomas Phillips, Chief of Police, Maui Police Department. "Our Department is very thankful to be able to partner with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to keep these violent gangs out of Hawaii,"

Operation Community Shield was launched in February 2005 after a threat assessment by all ICE field offices identified MS-13 as one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the country. The assessment found that most of the gang members were foreign-born, in the United States illegally, had prior criminal convictions, and/or were involved in crimes that made them subject to ICE's broad immigration and customs authorities.

ICE kicked off Operation Community Shield with a coordinated enforcement operation that resulted in the arrest of more than 100 members of MS-13. In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members. Since then, ICE has been using its broad administrative immigration authorities as well as its criminal authorities, including financial and narcotics investigations, to dismantle gang cliques around the country.

Thus far, ICE agents from 76 field offices, working with law enforcement agencies nationwide, have arrested a total of 2,388 suspected street gang members and associates. These apprehensions include 533 criminal arrests and 1,855 administrative arrests. More than 1,075 of these suspects have violent criminal histories. As part of the operation, ICE agents have also seized roughly 117 firearms.

Editor's Note: A media gallery featuring photos from Operation Community Shield along with a fact sheet and other materials related to this initiative are available at www.ice.gov.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.